

# The nation of Hawaii

The cry for Hawaiian self-rule is directed at the president

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**A**S PRESIDENT in this centennial year of the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy, Bill Clinton will be garlanded with soft leis of welcome that hide the thorny aspects of federal government relations with Hawaiians.

The most pointed issues of today trace directly back to a century ago, to the U.S. government role in the events that prompted Queen Liliu'okalani to yield her constitutional authority on Jan. 17, 1893. The Queen stepped aside to avoid bloodshed and naively trusted American justice to restore her to the throne.

Indeed, a dissident group of *kanaka maoli*, or native people, plans to con-

vene a judicial tribunal a month from now to charge the United States with violating international and federal law by establishing and maintaining its rule over Hawaiians.

"This is a step in redress," explains Dr. Kekuni Blaisdell, convenor of the Peoples' International Tribunal 1993. "We're calling on the executive, the president, to take appropriate steps to acknowledge this crime."

"Just as Japan withdrew from Korea, Great Britain withdrew from India and the Netherlands withdrew from Indonesia, we are calling on the United States to do the same for our nation."

Other leaders who consider themselves both Americans and Hawaiians are seeking federal recognition of a Hawaiian nation entitled to the same self-determination Indian tribes

have under treaties with Congress.

They want the Clinton administration to clearly affirm the special legal status of Hawaiians that stems from Hawaii's unique history and specific acts of Congress.

"Official recognition is the appropriate preamble to the assertion of Hawaiian sovereignty," said Clayton Hee, chairman of the state Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

Hawaiians were slapped in the face when George Bush acted on his last day in the Oval Office to disavow any trust relationship between the United States and native Hawaiians.

Under a patchwork of federal administrative policies that likens Hawaiians to Native Americans in some but not all circumstances, Hawaiians

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President Clinton is visiting a once-sovereign nation.

Queen Liliu'okalani's faith in American justice was misplaced.

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# Natives: Hawaiians demand recognition

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have been included in federal programs in culture, education, health, and labor. But according to the Bush interpretation, federal dollars can be denied to Hawaiian programs on the basis that they are racially discriminatory.

Hawaiians recall that Clinton said on the campaign trail that the United States does have a special relationship with native peoples. He was nominated by a convention that explicitly recognized that this special relationship includes Hawaiians.

They expect that as president, Clinton will reaffirm the trust relationship and make clear Hawaiian eligibility for grants under legislation designed to help Native Americans.

They point out that the Kingdom of Hawaii enjoyed a sovereign and independent political life within the community of nations in a way that Indian tribes never did, yet Congress has not recognized the right of the Hawaiian people to govern their affairs the way other Native Americans do.

Nor has Congress provided restitution for what Hawaiian leaders see as the theft of Hawaiian sovereignty and land.

"One hundred years have passed since the first calls for justice were sounded, and left to echo unanswered," the nine trustees of the state Office of Hawaiian Affairs said in a message marking the centennial of the overthrow.

"We hold that the state government is able and must contribute to the resolution of harms resulting from the illegal overthrow. But we know that it is the federal government which has the greater duty and power to settle native Hawaiian land claims and to recognize the inherent right of native Hawaiians to self-determined governance."

As damages for U.S. government participation in the overthrow, OHA trustees have recommended payment of \$10 billion to a native Hawaiian government.

Other federal issues spring from the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act adopted by Congress in 1921 in an effort to rehabilitate the dying Hawaiian race.

The act mischievously set aside lands in trust for only those Hawaiians of 50 percent or more aboriginal blood, thereby separating "50 percent or more" Hawaiians from family members with less blood quantum. Hawaiians are still unsure what to do about the dual definition.

Meanwhile, federal and state officials have argued over their duties and responsibilities for the Home Lands trust begun by Congress and put under state control at the time of statehood in 1959.

The program has been a sore point for more than 70 years. Fewer than 6,000 leases have been issued to beneficiaries, while more than 14,400 applications are on file. Roughly half the land is under lease to non-Hawaiians.

Gov. John Waihee, who is of Hawaiian ancestry, has sought to remedy state breaches of the Home Lands trust. A payment of \$12 million from the state treasury will compensate the Home Lands program for misuse of 24 parcels by the state.

But in a report on breaches of the Home Lands trust, Waihee last year made it clear that the federal government had responsibilities as well. He called on the White House to accept responsibility and make good on claims for wrongful federal uses of trust lands.

One example he cited is at Lualualei, on Oahu's western shore, where 1,365 acres of trust lands have been reserved for military use without compensation or land exchange, at an estimated loss to the trust of \$56.8 million.

Other public uses of 29,651 acres of trust lands amount to lost rent compensation of between \$8.7 million and \$12.5 million, Waihee said.

What's more, the state has argued, the federal government has failed to adequately finance or protect the Home Lands set aside by Congress.